

HOW DOES ENRICHED DIFFERENTIATED SMALL-GROUP  
INSTRUCTION AT THE MIDDLE-SCHOOL LEVEL ACCELERATE  
LEARNING AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY?

by

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## Capstone Project Summary

The guiding question: *How does enriched differentiated small-group instruction at the middle-school level accelerate learning and promote community?* has led to the development of ongoing professional development which promotes the inclusion of small-group instruction into mainstream traditional middle-school classrooms. The project was cultivated to uncover the need for small-group instruction and to provide structural possibilities to ELA educators in the form of a professional development presentation.

The professional development presentation is constructed to provide opportunities for self-reflection, collaboration, need and structural possibilities. The presentation guides teachers through the process by encouraging collaboration with peers and their professional learning communities (PLC). The presentation provides a structural foundation for collaboration and future next steps, prompting teachers to rethink their time-structures, differentiation and enrichment possibilities for their students. The structural professional development presentation also highlights how these structural changes promote and develop a stronger sense of belonging and community within our classrooms.

The professional development presentation will be shared in three installments throughout the year and housed on a common open-source learning platform so teachers can access resources, share ideas and collaborate. The common shared learning platform and course management system will promote, allow and provide easy access to articles, videos, differentiation and enrichment structures, student surveys and community building frameworks.

## **Intended Audience**

This project was developed to reach middle-school ELA educators who are teaching within a traditional mainstream classroom. The presentation is organized to help support teachers who balance and develop structures and curriculum for classrooms with diverse interest and ability learners.

The intended audience is for educators who want to continue to build a community of curious learners and hold the desire to create personalized instructional time for students on a regular basis. This professional development presentation and resources are organized for educators who see the need to develop strong connections with their students and value the benefits of student enrichment and differentiation opportunities.

## **Project Format**

The presentation at the professional development stage will introduce the structural need and possibilities of small-group instruction. Its development is intended to build on teacher strengths and beliefs and to provide them with time and information to rethink structural possibilities and collaborative benefits.

The project's curriculum guide will be housed on an open-sourced common learning platform such as Moodle or Canvas. This structure will allow for easy access to resources and will provide a platform for shared collaboration, reflection and continued development.

The project, at the professional learning community level (PLC), will be used to guide conversations and collaboration that will be developed and personalized within a PLC. Grade-level professional learning communities will use the presentation and project platform to springboard small-group differentiation feedback conversations encompassing best practices to

support the diverse needs of our learners. At the PLC level, teachers are encouraged to develop classroom structures that best fit the needs of their students by analyzing the feedback they gather through common district assessments and surveys.

The structure of the project can also be geared for and used at the individual classroom level. Teachers are encouraged to use these resources in collaboration with their PLC, but they can easily implement when they see the need in their individual classrooms. Curious teachers can easily access resources, restructure and share findings with their PLC. The project structure provides a reframing of classroom time while balancing academic rigor.

## **Conclusion**

The project is structured for staff professional development, PLC and individualized classroom use, and is broken into structural possibilities, need and reflection. The project creates a framework that uses common district assessment scores and student surveys to reflect on growth quarterly throughout the year. It is organized to encourage structural shifts based on the analysis of feedback to better develop relationships and community. Teacher survey is also included and is an important component of the success of the structure.